

OPINIONS AND DECLARATIONS RENDERED BY THE INTER- NATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE

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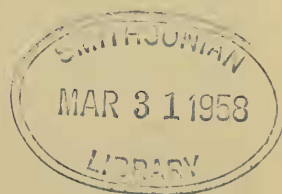
FRANCIS HEMMING, C.M.G., C.B.E.

Secretary to the Commission

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DIRECTION 89

Determination of the gender to be attributed to the
generic name *Numida* Linnaeus, 1764 (Class Aves)



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INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE

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(16th December 1954)

DIRECTION 89

DETERMINATION OF THE GENDER TO BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE GENERIC NAME "NUMIDA" LINNAEUS, 1764 (CLASS AVES)

RULING :—The gender to be attributed to the generic name *Numida* Linnaeus, 1764 (Class Aves) is hereby determined as being the masculine gender.

I. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE PRESENT " DIRECTION "

The present *Direction* is concerned with the gender to be attributed to the generic name *Numida* Linnaeus, 1764 (Class Aves), a name which was placed on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology* in 1916 (*Smithson. Publ.* 2409 : 177—182) by the Ruling given in *Opinion* 67. The question of the gender to be attributed to this name was included among a number of similar questions dealt with in a paper bearing the Registered Number Z.N.(S.) 925 which was submitted to the Commission on 29th April 1955 in connection with Voting Paper V.P.(O.M.)(55)16 and which has since been embodied in *Direction* 26 (1955, *Ops. Decls. int. Comm. zool. Nomencl.* 1(C) : 259—272). As the result of additional information then received the question of the gender to be attributed to the name *Numida* Linnaeus was withdrawn from the scope of the foregoing Voting Paper for further investigation. On the conclusion of the subsequent enquiries the follow-

ing report was submitted to the Commission by the Secretary on 20th September 1957 :—

Proposed determination of the gender to be attributed to the generic name " Numida " Linnaeus, 1764 (Class Aves)

By FRANCIS HEMMING, C.M.G., C.B.E.

(Secretary to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature)

The present note is concerned with the question of the gender to be attributed to the generic name *Numida* Linnaeus, 1764 (Class Aves), a name placed on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology* by the Ruling given in *Opinion* 67. The facts of this case are set out in the following paragraphs.

2. The generic name *Numida* Linnaeus was included with the other generic names of birds placed on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology* in the period up to the end of 1936 in a list submitted to the International Commission on 29th April, 1955 with Voting Paper V.P.(O.M.)(55)16, in which recommendations were made for the determination of the gender to be attributed to each of the names concerned. This proposal was submitted in accordance with the General Directive issued to the Commission by the Thirteenth International Congress of Zoology, Paris, 1948, that a gender be attributed to each of the generic names placed on the *Official List* up to that time. In the paper referred to above it was recommended that the gender to be attributed to the generic name *Numida* Linnaeus, 1764 should be the feminine gender, this being the gender attributed to this name by Linnaeus and also by later authors. There is, it is true a Latin word *numida*, meaning a " nomad ", derived from the Greek word " nomas " which has always been treated as being a masculine noun. There was, however, nothing in the *Systema Naturae* to show that the generic name *Numida* Linnaeus was derived from the foregoing word and for this reason and having regard to the attribution by Linnaeus of the feminine gender to this name, it seemed at that time not unreasonable to treat this name as a word consisting of an arbitrary combination of letters and thus to treat it as being feminine in gender in conformity with the usage in ornithological literature. It was for these reasons that in the paper referred to above it was recommended that the feminine gender be attributed to this name in the *Official List*.

3. During the Prescribed Voting Period for the Voting Paper referred to above Commissioner Afrânio do Amaral (*Sao Paulo, Brazil*) expressed the view that the recommendation submitted in this case was mis-conceived, arguing strongly that Linnaeus must have been aware of the Latin word "numida" and therefore that he must be assumed to have employed that word when he introduced the generic name *Numida*, the possibility that this generic name was no more than an arbitrary combination of letters being, in his (Commissioner do Amaral's) opinion, quite untenable. Commissioner do Amaral accordingly considered that the gender attributable to this generic name was undoubtedly masculine and asked that this case be given further consideration before a final decision was reached. Extracts from the letters on this subject received from Commissioner do Amaral are reproduced in the Annexe to the present note.

4. In the light of the representations received from Commissioner do Amaral I took the view that as Secretary my proper course would be to withdraw from the scope of Voting Paper V.P.(O.M.)(55)16 the proposal submitted in regard to the gender to be attributed to this generic name, in order to permit of the further consideration of the issues involved. This I did by a Minute executed on 29th May, 1955, the text of which has been reproduced in *Direction 26*, the *Direction* in which were later embodied the decisions taken by the Commission on the foregoing Voting Paper.

5. The question of the gender to be attributed to the generic name *Numida* Linnaeus is accordingly resubmitted for decision. On one side, we have the established usage of ornithologists in favour of the feminine gender; on the other side we have incontestable evidence that the generic name *Numida*, if derived from the Latin word "numida"—which I no longer think is open to question—is without doubt properly masculine in gender.

6. I may perhaps be permitted to observe that, although in general I am of the opinion that it is undesirable that long-established usage in zoological literature should be disturbed by the correction of the gender customarily assigned to generic names, I consider that this principle should not be treated as being of universal application and should be applied only (i) where there are a number of generic names with the same termination, in respect of each of which the same problem of gender arises, (ii) where the specific name of some particularly well-known animal would be affected or (iii) where the correction of the gender attributed to a given generic name would affect the termination employed for a substantial number of the specific names of species assigned to the genus concerned and where in consequence the correction of the gender used for the generic name in question would lead to a

marked disturbance in nomenclatorial practice. In other words, it seems to me to be reasonable that in this latter class of case the correct gender should be attributed to generic names, except where within a given genus there are a substantial number of adjectival specific names, the terminations customarily used for which would need to be changed if the gender to be attributable to the generic name concerned were to be corrected.

7. The present case does not appear to me to fall within any of the special classes suggested above. According to the latest general catalogue (Peters's *Checklist of Birds of the World*) this genus is currently treated as containing only one species (The Guinea Fowl) and that species bears a name (*meleagris*) which would remain unaltered, whether the gender attributed to the generic name *Numida* Linnaeus was masculine or feminine. The only change which would be involved would, according to the above *Checklist*, be in respect of a small number of subspecies, the terminations of the names of which would need to be changed from "-a" to "-us".

8. In the circumstances it appears to me that the present is a case where the normal gender rules should be applied and therefore that the gender to be attributed to the generic name *Numida* Linnaeus, 1764, in the *Official List* should be the masculine gender.

ANNEXE

Views on the question of the gender to be attributed to the generic name "Numida" Linnaeus expressed by Commissioner Afrânio do Amaral

(a) Note dated 10th May 1955

Numida (-itis) was masculine (not feminine) in Latin. For this reason I vote against the proposal [that the feminine gender be accepted for this generic name].

(b) Letter dated 22nd June 1955

I am compelled by linguistic arguments to insist on the question that I raised in my note of 10th May. I am not ready to accept the assumption that Linnaeus's name *Numida* "is no more than an arbitrary combination of letters". On the contrary, I am just convinced that Linnaeus, who knew Latin quite well, in including the name *Numida* in his *Systema Naturae* did nothing else than take from the classical Latin a proper, masculine noun that used to convey, in old Rome,

the general idea of a Nomad or an African (cf. Plinius, lib. 5, cap. 3 ; and Isidorus, lib. 9, cap. 2). In Du Cange's Glossarium (1733, vol. 4, p. 1246) we find, under *Numida* :

“ Numidae . . . quos mansiones saepius mutabant, nullam fixam sedem seu habitationem habentes.”

As such it was also applied, as an epithet, to Jugurtha by Sallustius. It was even a patronymic. It is related to Numidia, which was at that time the only well-known section of Africa. Corresponding to the south-western section of the Mediterranean region, it was sometimes synonymized with Mauretania (or Hesperides). Its adjectival form Numidicus, -a, -um, was applied by the Romans to many forms of animals living in Africa. There is no doubt that the expression Gallina Numidica was used by the Romans to signify the “wandering fowl” (Guinea fowl) in contrast to the sedentary (through domestication) fowl. In this regard Columella, in *De Re Rustica* (Ed. Rob. Stephanus, Paris. 1543), lib. VIII cap. 2, p. 280, wrote :

“Africana est, quam plerique Numidicam dicunt, meleagridi similis, nisi quod rutilam galeam, et cristam capito gerit, quae utraque sunt in meleagride coerulea.”

In Martialis—Epigramma III : 58 : “Et picta perdix, Numidicaeque guttatae”.

In Petronius—Satyricon : 55 : “Gallina tibi Numidica, tibi gallus spado Ciconia etiam grata, peregrina, hospita” . .

and in Calepinus—Septem Linguarum Lexicon (Ed. Batavia, 1746), vol. 2, p. 74 we read : “Gallinae Numidicae sunt, quas Martialis. 1.3. Epigr. 58 Numidicas guttatas appellat”.

No wonder, therefore, that Linnaeus, who must have known these linguistic facts, had also used the epithet *Numida* to mean a genus of wandering bird, that is, the Guinea fowl.

(c) Letter dated 31st August 1955

Numida, far from being “no more than an arbitrary combination of letters” is a real name, existing in classical Latin. It is indubitably a masculine noun. As such it was always treated in Latin. Indeed, to my knowledge no Latin author ever used it as a feminine noun. There is no doubt in my mind that the masculine is its gender from the linguistic standpoint. In this connection, besides the arguments I produced in my D/59—55 letter to you [of 22nd June 1955], I may

as well quote the following authoritative sources confirming my standpoint :

- (a) Plinius (in Nat. Hist. V : 3, para. 2) and Virgilius (in Aen. IV : 41) ;
- (b) Scheller (Riddle's trans.)—Lexicon Totius Latinitatis, Oxford, 1835 : 982 “ *Numida*, m. . . .”
- (c) Ernout & Meillet—Dict. Étymol. Langue, Latine Paris, 1951, 2 : 800 “ *Numida*, m. est tiré de l'accusatif nomada”, cf. Sommer-Handb. d. latein. Laut. -u. Formenlehre, Heidelberg, 1948, 1 : 65.

Consequences : In the light of this argument, on the one hand, I do not see how we could ever succeed in reaching nomenclatorial stability if we allow any author having not even a rusty knowledge of Latin to attribute to any noun (generic name) the gender that most pleases his fancy ; on the other hand, should we keep on admitting, in the application of Article 14, exceptions that will eventually constitute a heteroclitite set of directions following no system whatsoever, I am afraid we might soon find ourselves in an inextricable tangle. That rule might some day be ruled out from the Code. In my opinion it is much easier to induce zoologists to correct the gender of specific names so as to make them conform with the corresponding generic nouns, than to change altogether the sensible, the logical, the scholarly meaning of Article 14.

Conclusion : The gender change is really so simple that I have the impression that, should we insist on the enforcement of the meaning of Article 14 as well as with the decision we took thereon in Copenhagen, it would not take long before the specialists in other brands of zoology would follow suit and would correct the gender of such specific names so as to conform them with the Rules.

2. Registration of the present application : At the time when in 1955 it was decided that further investigations should be undertaken in regard to the gender to be attributed to the generic name *Numida* Linnaeus, the problem so involved was allotted the Registered Number Z.N.(S.) 1012.

II. THE DECISION TAKEN BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE

3. Issue of Voting Paper V.P.(O.M.)(57)17 : On 20th September 1957 a Voting Paper (V.P.(O.M.)(57)17) was issued in which

the Members of the Commission were invited to vote either for, or against, " the proposal relating to the gender to be attributed on the *Official List* to the generic name *Numida* Linnaeus, 1764 (Class Aves), as set out in paragraph 8 of the paper bearing the Registered Number Z.N.(S.) 1012 [i.e. in the paragraph numbered as above in the paper reproduced in the first paragraph of the present *Direction*] submitted by the Secretary simultaneously with the present Voting Paper ".

4. The Prescribed Voting Period : As the foregoing Voting Paper was issued under the One-Month Rule, the Prescribed Voting Period closed on 20th October 1957.

5. Particulars of the Voting on Voting Paper V.P.(O.M.)(57)17 : At the close of the Prescribed Voting Period, the state of the voting on Voting Paper V.P.(O.M.)(57)17 was as follows :—

(a) *Affirmative Votes had been given by the following twenty-two (22) Commissioners (arranged in the order in which Votes were received) :*

Bodenheimer ; Lemche ; Boschma ; Riley ; Hankó ;
Sylvester-Bradley ; Stoll ; Bradley (J.C.) ; Hering ;
Esaki ; Vokes ; Jaczewski ; do Amaral ; Mertens ;
Dymond ; Key ; Hemming ; Cabrera ; Tortonese ;
Kühnelt ; Bonnet ; Prantl ;

(b) *Negative Votes, three (3) :*

Mayr ; Holthuis ; Miller ;

(c) *Voting Papers not returned :*

None.

6. Declaration of Result of Vote : On 21st October 1957, Mr. Hemming, Secretary to the International Commission, acting as Returning Officer for the Vote taken on Voting Paper

V.P.(O.M.)(57)17, signed a Certificate that the Votes cast were as set out in paragraph 5 above and declaring that the proposal submitted in the foregoing Voting Paper had been duly adopted and that the decision so taken was the decision of the International Commission in the matter aforesaid.

7. Preparation of the Ruling given in the present " Direction " :
On 22nd November 1957, Mr. Hemming prepared the Ruling given in the present *Direction* and at the same time signed a Certificate that the terms of that Ruling were in complete accord with those of the proposal approved by the International Commission in its Vote on Voting Paper V.P.(O.M.)(57)17.

8. The prescribed procedures were duly complied with by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature in dealing with the present case, and the present *Direction* is accordingly hereby rendered in the name of the said International Commission by the under-signed Francis Hemming, Secretary to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, in virtue of all and every the powers conferred upon him in that behalf.

9. The present *Direction* shall be known as *Direction Eighty-Nine (89)* of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature.

DONE in London, this Twenty-Second day of November, Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-Seven.

*Secretary to the International Commission
on Zoological Nomenclature*

FRANCIS HEMMING